

SPECIAL REPORT

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SEMINAR MARKETING

By

Mike Marchev

You are going to like this Special Report.

It teaches everything you will need to initially know about the greatest single marketing maneuver there isSeminar Marketing.

I have been presenting seminars for over 15 years and I am quick to mention that a full 85% of my professional contacts have come through this strategy. There simply is not a better way to position yourself as one in the know.

The problem is that too few people feel that they are up to the task of speaking in front of groups. To this I say "BALDERDASH!"

What you may be frightened of is getting caught telling a lie. The remedy for this is to simply share information that is factual ... as you know it to be.

The power is in the numbers. You say something once to a room full of interested prospects and you are bound to get a handful of people wanting to learn more. The last time I presented a seminar for a company, by noon, the sales manager had 120 prospects to follow up with. Do you know how long it would take for a small sales department to come up with 120 qualified prospects?

ANSWER: A long time.

Read through this Special Report and let your imagination run a little wild.

Then pick a date and begin planning your first educational seminar. You will be glad you did and you will thank me for many years to come.

Mike Marchev

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SEMINAR MARKETING

SEMINAR PROSPECTING BENEFITS

I have found there are some real benefits to seminar prospecting. You will be able to prospect much more efficiently in today's uncertain economic climate. Well-planned seminars are a proven method of building and maintaining your business and expanding your client base.

Conducting a seminar is one of the ultimate forms of leverage. You can reach many people at one time. The nice thing about seminars is the fact that you only have to tell your story once in front of 50 people instead of having to make 50 separate presentations.

Here are some of the many benefits you will derive from conducting seminars:

- * Satisfy the public's quest for knowledge.
- * Increase the effectiveness of your prospecting.
- * Increase or build your business quickly.
- * Establish your credentials in the community as an authority.
- * Develop an invaluable source of prospects.
- * Create a strong base for future referrals through the personal contacts.
- * Build your self-confidence.
- * Improve your knowledge of products and add to your experience.
- * Communicate with your clients face to face which builds relationships.
- * Activate dormant accounts.
- * Reinforce past performance and level of service.
- * Demonstrate your professionalism.
- * Add value to your clients.

THE PURPOSE OF SEMINARS

The most important reason to conduct a seminar is to convey your professionalism, credibility, and trustworthiness. Your understanding of the needs of your audience is usually far more important than the topic covered. The real sale you are trying to make is the sale of "you." Once that is done, business becomes much easier to do.

Goals to establish at your seminar are:

1. You are credible and trustworthy.
2. You are well trained to handle their travel requirements.
3. You understand the needs of those in similar situations.
4. You have a proven track record.
5. You are a source of reliable, accurate knowledge.

In the following guide you will find all that you need in order to prepare, deliver and follow up on your seminar. I have given you tips that have come from many years of conducting seminars. Careful planning lies at the core of every successful presentation. Because of this, I have included a checklist for you to follow. By following this checklist, you will assure the success of your prospecting and seminar activities.

SEMINAR BASICS

TAILORING THE SEMINAR TO YOUR PROSPECTS

The key to putting on an effective seminar is to match the seminar topic with the right audience. The job you do of targeting your market and directing your prospecting efforts to attract the group of people who could most benefit from your message is the key to effective seminar selling.

SELECT A DAY AND TIME THAT SUITS YOUR AUDIENCE

You should select a seminar date and time that does not conflict with any holidays or events that might be happening in your community. Check to see that no major events

are taking place, such as the World Series or an address from the President. Pick a time that is convenient for your target group to attend. You might want to run two seminars in one day, one in the afternoon and another in the evening. For those who work downtown, they can drop by during lunch or stop by just after work (if you are conducting your seminar in late afternoon.) You would be surprised how many people can't attend the evening seminar but can pop over for a luncheon seminar, or just after work.

From personal experience, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays have been the best days for-running seminars. Fridays are out, and there is too much going on for a successful Monday seminar. I know of some people that have done a Saturday morning seminar and done quite well. The key is to make the seminar convenient for your audience.

LOCATION OF YOUR SEMINAR

If you are hosting a small seminar, think about the conference room in your office. If you are going to be using a location such as a hotel, you will have to do a little more research.

Most successful seminar locations are characterized by the following features:

1. The locations are easy to find.
2. Ample parking is provided.
3. A nice facility in a nice part of town.

You should also:

1. Select a room that is large enough.
2. Select a room that is well lighted, clean and well-ventilated.\
3. Select a room that is quiet and free from outside noises.

Since you will be using slides, choose a room that can be darkened in one corner for the screen. You also want a brightly lit corner to stand in so those in attendance can see you. By having eye contact with your audience, you will be able to read their body

language to gauge how well they are responding. You also want a well-lit area for the audience, so they can see and take notes.

PROSPECTS

Who do you invite?

This is the foundation where we begin building your prospecting strategy for your successful seminar. You will invite a cross section of existing clients in addition to new prospects. The lifeblood of our business is prospecting.

Here are a few sources to try in building your prospect file:

- * Existing clients - both active and inactive.
- * Referred leads.
- * Directories - financial, manufacturing, professional, etc.
- * New move-ins in the community.
- * Charitable donation lists.
- * Chamber of Commerce lists.
- * Rented lists from list brokers.
- * Existing prospect file.
- * Corporate directories.
- * Small business owners.
- * Club directories.

ATTRACTING SEMINAR ATTENDEES

Here are the most popular methods:

- 1 . Personal invitation to selected clients by phone
2. Direct mail - usually wedding-style invitation
3. Newspaper advertisement
4. Radio spot
5. Cold Calling

PLANNING THE PRESENTATION

There are really two key ingredients to a successful seminar.

1. Know your stuff.
2. Know who you are stuffing.

KNOW YOUR STUFF

Knowledge is potential power. What you do with that knowledge is power. The key to a successful seminar is to know your topic inside and out. Your prospect will know if you are prepared or not. They can tell if you believe what you are saying or you are merely uttering words.

The more familiar you are with your material, the better the seminar will flow and the better it will be received. The better you know your material, the more compelling you seem to your audience. The more compelling you seem to your audience, the more people you will move to take action. Remember, nothing happens until someone sells something. By being enthusiastic and knowing your material you will cause your audience to take action by setting an appointment, opening an account, or thinking of you as an authority figure.

In addition to knowing your stuff inside and out, you want to know yourself even better. There are a couple of sales that have to take place before that prospect will become a client.

- You will have to sell them on "Why you?"
- You will have to sell them on "Why your firm?"
- You will have to sell them on "Why they should take action now?"
- In other words, from the client's perspective: "What's in it for me?"

KNOW WHO YOU ARE STUFFING

The key here is to know your audience. Doing your homework before they arrive can easily do this. The better you target your market, the better job you can do at knowing whom you are stuffing.

- * Know what their interests are.
- * Know what topics they are most interested in.
- * Know what topics they are most concerned about.
- * Know what their hot buttons are.

By doing your homework, you can prepare yourself to handle any objections and potential obstacles.

THE SEMINAR

It is very important that you arrive at the location in plenty of time to make sure that everything is in place and all the necessary arrangements have been made. It is especially important for you to arrive extra early when this is the first time you have used a particular location. Once you have established a working relationship, then you can arrive a little later. You want to inspect the set up of the chairs, the number of chairs, the audiovisual aids, the refreshments, and the signs instructing people as to where your seminar will be held.

As a general rule when setting up the chairs, set up fewer chairs than you expect. This will allow the room to fill up and you have to add more chairs, compared to having a room set for 100 and you only have 25 show up. If you are expecting 40, have 30 chairs in the room.

Make sure that additional chairs are readily available in the event you fill up the room.

I would highly recommend that you try to greet guests at the door as they enter the room. This has a way of breaking the ice that usually exists at any seminar. You can also start to build that all-important relationship. Another reason to greet them is to get them to sign the register.

You might want to use nametags, and then if they don't sign the register at least you know who attended and who didn't. This will become very important in the follow-up.

AUDIOVISUAL AIDS

There are a number of alternatives awaiting you when you conduct your seminar, and a number of things to consider when deciding which method you will use.

Some of the most common forms of audiovisual aids are color slides, overheads, flip charts, and blackboards. With some software programs available today, such as Lotus Freelance Graphics and Microsoft PowerPoint, you can create your own slides in record time. Well-done slides look very professional and are much more impressive.

Overheads seem to be a little more cumbersome and run a distant second to professional-looking slides.

Flip charts and blackboards are easy to use but have a couple of big drawbacks. The biggest drawback is the fact that your back is facing the audience for most of the seminar. Flip charts and blackboards also take time to write on and generally look very sloppy.

As a rule of thumb, it is usually a good idea to stick to one or two types of visual aids so you don't confuse your audience.

THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Some people who conduct seminars dread the question and answer session. I look forward to it because you can really flush out the prospects that are most interested in doing business with you. The other reason is the fact that the audience is participating. By getting participation, you build rapport with the audience.

PUBLIC SPEAKING TIPS

Stand up straight while you speak. Your posture is very important in helping to establish your credibility. It also allows you to breathe much more naturally.

Memorize the first two minutes and the last two minutes. By memorizing the opening and closing, you will guarantee your seminar gets off on the right foot and concludes strongly. You want to catch their attention quickly.

Practice your timing. Timing is everything with conducting seminars. I have found while speaking that there is a tendency to talk too fast and try to rush through your information. Your pace and voice inflection are very important, especially for points you want to stress. Practice as often as you can to get your timing down perfect.

Remember to speak clearly and louder than you normally would. I have found that when you are in front of a large group it requires more energy to keep the audience in the palm of your hand than it does with a small group. Always speak clearly. You know what you are saying. The guy in row 24 might not. Speak clearly and use words that everyone understands.

Practice, practice, and more practice. Be familiar with your material. Know your stuff inside and out. The true sign of a great speaker is one who captures the audience and is able to keep right on going even if he gets away from the podium. You should get to the point, over time, where you can conduct your seminar without notes. The more prepared you are before your seminar, the better your seminar will flow.

Include a question and answer session. As you start the seminar, take the first couple of minutes and let them know how the evening will proceed. Explain to them that there will be plenty of time for questions at the end of the seminar. Ask them to jot down questions and you will answer them during the question and answer session toward the end of the seminar.

Include as many personal stories as you can. People love to hear war stories. Personalize your seminar. This has a way of bonding with the attendees.

Always remember who your audience is. You should tailor your speech to your audience. Don't get over their heads. Don't use words they won't understand.

Save handouts until the end of the seminar. I have found it best to only provide a yellow pad for note taking. At the start of the seminar explain to them that they will each be receiving a packet of material pertaining to this seminar. The problem with passing out the handouts during the seminar is the prospect is focused on the handouts and not on you.

Maintain eye contact at all times. You will find that there are just some people who, no matter what was being said, would send off bad body language. Those are not the people with whom you want to establish eye contact. In fact, I try not to even look at those people. I look at a point just over their heads. They feel that I'm looking at them, but in fact I'm looking at a spot on the wall. I try to focus my eye contact only with the people that I seem to be reaching and connecting with. You will be able to tell very quickly. Their body language will give it away.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SEMINARS

How many people should attend my seminar?

I would suggest you limit attendance at your seminars to between 30 and 40 people for two reasons. First, you will want to set appointments with these people as soon as you possibly can. The first 48 hours is the key. I find that if you wait too long then you have lost the momentum you created at the seminar. Remember the saying, "Strike while the iron is hot." If you have too many attending your seminar, then it is virtually impossible to follow up and set individual appointments in a timely fashion.

The second reason is that people generally feel less threatened in smaller groups and they tend to be more comfortable. I find that in smaller groups of 20 to 40 people it is much easier to develop a relationship than it is for 70 to 80 people.

How many people will I have to invite to get one seminar attendee?

This varies for each individual, but you can follow some general guidelines. For cold prospecting, expect 1 out of every 15 to confirm a reservation. Out of those, you can expect to have 60 % to 75 % attend. For example, if you speak with 400 prospects, you should expect as a general rule about 20 seminar attendees.

The numbers will be a little different for current clients. Those numbers will be higher. If you do it in the right way, you can expect to get in front of most of your clients. The nice thing about seminars is the fact that you can conduct the seminar as often as you like, which means that over time you can get most all of your clients to attend.

Should I charge people to attend my seminar or make it FREE to everyone?

There are two schools of thought. Some say that you should never charge for your seminars because of the increase in business that you will experience. After all, that is the reason you are conducting the seminars in the first place.

On the other hand, if you charge the attendees, they will most likely be much more serious and more qualified prospects than if the seminar is free. There are professional

seminar attendees out there who are more concerned with what is being served than what is being said, and by charging for the seminar this will certainly stop those people from attending. If the prospects attending are more serious about the topic and are willing to pay for attending, then you obviously should be doing more business as a result.

You will have to decide what your personal preference is. Personally, I would not charge. I would try a few seminars to see how it goes. I feel that by having one hour in front of people, I can sell myself and my firm enough for them to want to come back and see me individually at *F'* later date. That should allow me to do enough business to recoup my investment many times over.

Should I keep my seminar content and terminology simple?

By all means. The last thing you want to do is to start using words 8 feet long that no one can understand. You will turn off an audience quicker by doing that than just about anything I can think of. For the most part, those attending are probably more sophisticated about investing than the general public, but they might not be up on the latest lingo of the investment arena. Try to keep it as simple as possible.

How long should I rehearse my presentation?

As long as it takes. You will want to come across as though you are very comfortable with your material. It should flow very easily and effortlessly. You will want to appear confident and relaxed in front of your audience. The more you practice, the more relaxed and confident you will appear.

Practice in front of a video camera, if you can. By giving your seminar in front of a video camera you can pick up on the body language you are sending forth. You may notice that you are slouching, or fidgeting with your hands. The time you spend alone in front of the video camera will pay big dividends later when you are actually in front of your prospects.

What can I do to get rid of the "butterflies" before I speak?

Not much, it's natural. Even the best of speakers who speak professionally have butterflies. Once you are involved in the seminar you will be fine. Actually, I feel that if you don't have butterflies in your stomach, you don't care that much about the type of job that you do. It is perfectly natural to be nervous; that only means that you truly care about the job that you do and that you want to do your best. I think back to when I played basketball in college: before the tip off I was a mess, but once the jump ball went up I was fine. It's the same way with your seminar. Once you start talking, the butterflies will leave. The better you know your material, the quicker butterflies will disappear.

What if it is time to start and not everyone has arrived?

Use your best judgment. There will always be those who are late, but you shouldn't penalize those who are on time by waiting for those who aren't. The number of people who are late and the number who are already present will dictate if you should wait or not. At most, wait five to ten minutes maximum. Never wait longer than ten minutes.

As those people stroll into the room, you will want to greet them and ask them to fill in the seats as close to the front as possible. Quickly explain to them that you will fill them in on what they missed at the end of the seminar.

How can I make my audience feel more at ease?

I know the tension that can exist before you start speaking. I usually go out into the audience before I speak and greet everyone. Another option is to stand at the door and greet everyone on the way into the room. In this way you can break the ice and start the relationship-building process.

One option is to provide nametags for everyone as they arrive. Place the tags on the registration table outside the room. The nice thing about nametags is the fact that during the seminar you can address each person by his/her name, especially when they ask questions.

How do I involve the audience?

I have found that the best way to involve the audience is by asking them questions. I think you will do far better in your seminar if you stay conceptual, rather than talking about specific recommendations.

You might want to have slides or handouts that will get them thinking. You will find that they will become more involved.

What should I do if someone interrupts my seminar?

Every now and then someone will ask a question that interrupts your train of thought. I think you have to view that situation the same as you would an objection. Welcome them! If I am at your seminar and I am not interested in what you are speaking about, I would certainly not take the time to ask a question. The only way you will know that you have someone's interest is if they ask questions. That is why you never want to tell them everything in your seminar - so they can ask questions.

The way to handle someone who interrupts you is to acknowledge it, but explain to him or her that you will be addressing that point later in the seminar.

Sometimes you will have someone in the room that seems puzzled, or they look anxious. I think it can be to your advantage in making them feel comfortable by pausing to say, "Mr. Jones, you look slightly puzzled. Can I go over that point again?" People usually like the attention, and you help create a friendlier atmosphere.

What is the best way to handle a seminar attendee who becomes overly talkative, or seems to doubt what I am saying?

I think anytime someone expresses doubt or objections, let that person's comments work in your favor rather than against you. I think in many cases those are the people that are the best prospects. The more they object, the more interested they are. They are just looking for reassurance.

I can think of times when a member of the audience has become loud and has tried to dominate the seminar. When that happens you should not hesitate to interrupt the prospect and say something such as, "Mr. Jones, that is an interesting point and deserves more attention, but I think we're taking up way too much of the group's time. I'll be happy to discuss this with you individually after the seminar.

What if I don't know the answer to a question?

I can almost guarantee you that at some point in time you will be asked a question that you don't know the answer.

I think the best way to handle that is to say, "Mr. Jones, that is a very good question but I don't know the answer. I'll be glad to find out and get in touch with you in the near future. " The best policy here is honesty. They will understand that no one has all the answers, and I think by being honest and letting them know you don't know the answer that you are perceived with more credibility and trust.

Suppose no one asks questions after my speech?

The best way to handle this is to have some common questions that usually come up already prepared to answer. Many times people don't want to be the first one to ask a question. If you start off by saying, "Now, I would like to start off the question and answer session by addressing the most common question that comes up; then we will take other questions. One of the most common questions that comes up is..."

You should have at least five questions already prepared with answers that relate to the topic, which you are addressing.

If you have friends in the audience, request that they ask the first question, to get the ball rolling. Once people start asking questions, it usually goes on automatic pilot. Sometimes they have so many questions that you eventually have to limit the questions and conclude the seminar.

As the seminar leader, it is important for you to repeat the question after someone asks. Speak loudly so everyone can hear the question.

What is the best way to conclude my seminar?

Always try to finish your seminar on time. I find that it is easiest to remove my watch before I begin and lay it on the podium. In that way you can always see what time it is without having to look at your wrist. If you start looking at your wrist to see what time it is, the audience will also.

As you start to conclude your seminar, you will want to say, 'We only have time for two more questions. If anyone has additional questions, I will be happy to stay as long as is needed to answer them and I will be glad to speak with you privately. '

Always take time to thank those attending for taking time out of their day. Let them know that you look forward to meeting with them one-on-one. At this time, you will usually have some type of refreshments served. This will definitely help you to spend more quality time with the most qualified prospects.

BASIC SEMINAR CHECKLIST

The following checklist will help you to organize your seminar.

6-8 weeks prior to your seminar:

- Clear seminar with compliance or branch manager.
- Choose seminar type (single or series).
- Choose your topic and order the seminar package.
- Determine the seminar date.
- Book a convenient location.
- Prepare your target prospecting list for that seminar.

4 weeks prior to your seminar:

- Invite outside speakers, if any.
- Order any handouts you might be passing out.
- Check on supplies needed for seminar and order if needed.
- Prepare promotional materials.

2-3 weeks prior to seminar:

- Mail your invitations. Enclose a self-addressed envelope.
- Make preliminary arrangements for refreshments.
- Place the newspaper advertisement for your seminar.
- Run your radio spot.

1 week prior to your seminar:

- Review your script and slides.
- Obtain whatever equipment is necessary for your presentation.
Prepare nametags.
- Confirm attendees via phone and/or mail.
- Confirm location, seating number and refreshments.

1-2 days prior to your seminar:

- Call everyone who was sent an invitation.
- Remind them of the date, time and place.

The day of the seminar:

Arrive at the location at least one or two hours early in order to inspect the facilities, and make sure that everything is in order and that your equipment is set up. Be sure signs are posted,

indicating starting time and the room in which the seminar will be held.

Place the sign-in sheet in a convenient location so that everyone will pass by it before they enter the room.

Relax, it's show time. Put on your career-best performance. For you it might be the 50th time that you have given the same exact seminar, but for those in attendance it is opening night. Give it your best.

The day after the seminar:

- Organize personal notes on attendees.
- Send letters and call those who did not attend.
- Send letters to thank those who attended.
- Call all attendees to set up appointments.

1 week following the seminar:

Prepare and mail follow up mailing.

Add seminar names to your prospect list so they receive periodic mail.

Many of these tasks on the seminar checklist can and should be done by assistants and secretaries. You should be delegating all activities that you possibly can.

SEMINAR FOLLOW UP GUIDELINES

This is the critical stage of seminar prospecting. It's great to have a successful seminar, but that is only half of the equation. The most important part is yet to come. I have broken it down into six critical areas of follow-up that will determine the success or failure of your seminar efforts. By following these five guidelines, you will be in a position to close more of the appointments you are seeing and gather more of their business at the same time.

STEP 1 Go through attendee list and gather notes.

It is very important to know who attended and who did not. You will want to gather your notes on each prospect if you remember anything specific

about that individual. The more you know about your prospect, the better your chances are of hitting it off and finding some common ground to continue the discussion in person, in a face-to-face meeting.

STEP 2 Send a thank you the day after the seminar.

Send a personal thank-you note to each individual that attended your seminar. Let them know how much you enjoyed having them attend. In your note, remind them about the personal appointment you would like to have with them.

STEP 3 Call everyone who attended within 48 hours.

There are really three categories of people whom you want to call after your seminar. First, call those who attended your seminar. Second, call those who confirmed their attendance but were no-shows. Third, call those who couldn't attend your seminar but were interested.

Now is the best time to reach them because the seminar is still fresh in their minds. If you don't take advantage of this opportunity, you have just wasted an incredible amount of energy and money. Follow-up is the key.

- 1 ***Call each prospect that attended your seminar and try to schedule an appointment. There will never be a better time to turn them into a client. Ask them how they enjoyed the seminar.***

Come away after this call with an appointment so you can continue the discussion in person. By starting with those who attended your seminar, you will have some people who will want to see you. This has a way of making it easier to keep dialing and speaking with people. Success breeds success.

2. ***Next, call each prospect that confirmed but didn't attend.***

I actually found these people to be the most fun to call. I found that those who had said they would attend, but didn't, feel as though they owe you something. They pay their bill by seeing you in person and they listen to you. I found this group to be a very good source of new business. When you get them listening, then you are motivating them to take action.

STEP 4 Send a letter to prospects that couldn't attend.

I found that this approach keeps your name in front of them and hopefully they will attend your next seminar. You will find the letter in the appendix. The letter says, "I'm sorry we missed you last night, but I'm sure you had a very good reason. Let me fill you in on what we talked about. " Offer to send them the literature and the Audio Business Card that you distributed at the seminar. This is an effective way to judge interest. Maybe they did have a genuine reason for not attending your seminar. If they are still interested in receiving the material, send it to them and follow up a couple of days later to set an appointment and/or invite them to the next seminar.

STEP 5 Don't give up too early.

Sometimes we never know how close we came to having a new client because we gave up just a little too early. Realize that it takes a while for prospects to become clients. The better job you do of selling you in the seminar, the quicker they will become clients. Remember, you are selling yourself first and your product second.

Don't make the mistake of throwing in the towel too soon. Just the fact that they attended your seminar means they are interested in some aspect of what you had to say. Maybe they are not ready to jump today, but if you keep in touch, your chances of doing business down the road are very good.

STEP 6 Once they become clients, ask for referrals.

Referrals are the lifeblood of the business. Remember to ask for the names of those friends, associates and relatives they know who might want to attend your next seminar. This is by far the best way to start your prospecting list for your next seminar. You should be able to generate at least two referrals from those that want to meet with you individually, and in some cases many more.